

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly amend claims 1-8, 13 and 16-20 and add claims 21 and 22, all without prejudice, as follows:

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1. (Amended) A convertible cane [assembly] comprising a pair of separate walking canes each having an upright support providing an exterior, a [first] foot adjacent a lower end of the support and a [first] handle adjacent an upper end of the support allowing each handle to be grasped by a different hand of a user allowing the canes to be used separately and independently, and a connector detachably securing the canes together in a position wherein the support exteriors and the handles are in side-by-side juxtaposed relation so the canes, when secured together, can be used as a single cane [and the assembly provides a second handle for grasping by the user and a second foot for contacting an underlying surface].

2. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein each [first] foot comprises an resilient pad.

3. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 2 wherein the resilient pad is at least half of the cross-sectional area of the support.

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4. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the [first] feet, in the side-by-side position of the supports, provide a pair of flat surfaces defining a single plane [and] thereby [provide the second foot] providing a combined foot for supporting the convertible cane when it is used as a single cane.

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5. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the [first] handles, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, abut and provide [the second] a combined handle for grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane.

6. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 5 wherein the [second] combined handle provides a hand receiving section having a curved upper surface, the hand receiving section being not more than about 3" in width.

7. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the [first] handles, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, are spaced apart and one of the [first] handles [comprises the second handle] provides a second handle for grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane.

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8. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the [first resilient] feet each comprise a rubber pad.

9. Non-elected species.

10. Originally submitted.

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11. Non-elected species.

12. Non-elected species.

13. Non-elected species. (Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the connector comprises a slot on each of the canes which mate in the position wherein the support exteriors are in side-by-side relation and a pivoted tab for movement between a first position residing in both slots and a second position outside at least one of the slots.

14. Non-elected species.

15. Non-elected species.

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16. (Amended) A convertible cane assembly comprising a pair of walking canes each having an upright support providing an exterior, a [first] foot adjacent a lower end of the support and a [first] handle adjacent an upper end of the support allowing each handle to be grasped by a user's hand so the canes are useable separately and independently, and [means connecting] a connector securing the canes together in a side-by-side position where the support exteriors are in facing relation and the handles are in side-by-side juxtaposed relation so the assembly acts as a single cane with the juxtaposed handles providing a support [providing a second handle] for grasping by a user's hand [and a second resilient foot for contacting an underlying surface] in the side-by-side position.

17. The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein the [first] feet, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, provide a pair of flat surfaces defining a single plane and thereby provide [the second foot] a support for a user's load.

18. The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein the [first] handles, in the side-by-side position of the supports, provide [the second] a combined handle for grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane.

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19. The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein the [first] handles, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, are spaced apart and one of the [first] handles [comprises the second handle] provides a second handle for grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane.

20. (Amended) A method of using a convertible cane assembly of the type having a pair of walking canes each having an upright support providing an exterior, a foot adjacent a lower end of the support and a [first] handle adjacent an upper end of the support allowing each handle to be grasped by a different [user's] hand of a user, the method comprising

attaching the canes in side-by-side relation where the support exteriors are in facing relation and the handles are in side-by-side juxtaposed relation to provide a single cane and using the single cane as a walking aid; and

detaching the canes from the side-by-side relation and using the canes separately and simultaneously as canes providing walking aids.

21. Newly submitted. The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein, in the side-by-side juxtaposed relation of the handles, the handles are parallel.

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22. Newly submitted. The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein, in the side-by-side juxtaposed relation of the handles, the handles are parallel.

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